

ture, should be biennial. He had upon better knowledge and more mature consideration, changed his opinion, and, he believed, that the greater part of that majority, if they had had the same information that he had derived from his experience in our legislation, would now vote for annual sessions. The members of this Convention came freshly from the people of Maryland. They are certainly a fair average of the intelligence of the community, and if they, individually, prefer annual sessions, they may well feel assured that such is the preference of the people themselves. He declared that he knew no other safe or proper rule of action, in his representative capacity, than to following his own conscientious convictions, and to presume that the people would approve of his judgment. If the representative sought in regard to these questions to discover the wishes of his constituents, he would embark, without compass, on a wide sea of conjecture.

His reasons for voting at the polls for biennial sessions, were his dread of too much legislation, and his desire to save the State the expense of the alternate session. Shortly after he was elected a Delegate to the General Assembly, and placed in a position which obliged him to become thoroughly acquainted with the financial laws and their system of administration, in this State. He then felt ashamed of the ignorance in which he had voted for biennial sessions. He became convinced, that as long as the receipts and disbursements of the Treasury were so great, our security required yearly sessions of the Legislature. The Treasurer now receives upwards of \$1,200,000 annually, and there is often a balance of \$400,000 on hand, from month to month, and on the transactions of the Treasurer, the law, as yet, has not imposed adequate checks. The only control over that officer and his accounts, was in the Legislature. No Treasury could well be in a more exposed condition. We had been remarkably fortunate in the character of our officers, but safety to the State, and justice to our own agents, require that they should not be subjected to such great temptations. All the officers in the State engaged in the collection of the revenue, and the number is very great, and their duties most various, are obliged by law to make their returns to the Legislature, as well as to the Treasurer. The Legislature is the grand inquest of the State, and the knowledge of this brings all these officers up to the line of their duty. This is our great security for their promptness and efficiency. To demonstrate this in detail, would, perhaps, be tedious to the Convention, he merely stated it now, as the result of his own observation and experience.

As to the saving effected by biennial sessions, (Mr. D.) thought it merely apparent, not real. We need this check on the accounting officers, and the cost of the alternate session, was of little consequence compared with the security obtained. Besides, the public moneys are more loosely and lavishly appropriated by a Legislature, under the biennial system, where the members are not so soon called to account for their action by the people. This is well illustrated by the

proceedings of the Legislature, at its last session.

He differed with the gentleman from Dorchester, (Mr. Phelps,) in his ideas of retrenchment and economy. True economy is judicious expenditure. The refusal to incur an expense, needed for a proper administration of affairs, is false economy. The gentleman from Dorchester, had complained that articles had been reported here, for the appointment of a Comptroller of the Treasury, thus establishing a new office.

Mr. D. stated that he considered such an officer, in this State, absolutely necessary. It is impossible for the Treasurer, to administer, with efficiency, all the multifarious duties now imposed upon him; and a Comptroller is also needed as a check upon the Treasurer and Commissioner of Loans. He did not hesitate to express a belief, that if we had had such an officer for the last ten years, we might have secured annually, from ten to twenty thousand dollars more revenue than was secured.

In regard to the excess of legislation, (Mr. D., said,) he objected to it as much as any man could, and he would go as far as any one, in restricting the Legislature, so as to remedy that evil. But, he asserted, the legislation under our biennial system, is as excessive an amount, as when we had annual sessions, and is decidedly worse in quality. If worse in quality, then will there be more need of future change or explanatory supplements. The session being limited, and members being always most anxious to get through their private and local bills, of which there is a great accumulation in the course of two years, the public business is thrust aside, or most carelessly performed. Mr. D. considered this as fully demonstrated by the laws of the session of 1849, to which he particularly referred.

Mr. D. concluded by repeating, that he believed the annual system was very important in regard to our finances, was more truly economical than the biennial system, and really more conducive to well considered and permanent legislation.

Mr. SELLMAN expressed himself conversant with the whole history of the legislation of the State in regard to this question of biennial sessions. Sometimes it had been used as a stalking-horse—sometimes as an ambling pony. It had been presented as one of the measures for the restoration and preservation of the State credit, and so far as it had been based upon that consideration, it had due weight with him.

But how stood the matter in regard to the argument of the gentleman from Dorchester, (Mr. Phelps)? If it was a mere question of economy, that gentleman had not carried his argument out as he ought to have done; for, in view of economy alone, why designate two years as the period of the meeting of the legislature? Why not say, once in four, six, eight, or ten years?

But there was another and more important principle at stake—that was to say, the right of the people frequently to supervise the acts of their public servants. He referred to the history of this question under the old Constitution, and stated that the motive which controlled its framers